

Student Perspective | 8 MIN READ

Students Have Questions on School Reopening... Please Answer Them Now

By Gabriela Mead, Rising Senior, Miramar, Florida
July 21, 2020



Monday morning, I sent out a survey to 10 of my friends to see what concerns they had about school reopening. I invited them to forward the survey to other students. In less than 12 hours, I received 68 responses and 87 questions.

I know my sample size is relatively small, but I was able to identify clear patterns in my findings. These are the observations I would like to share with those planning school reopening.

Communicate Early and Often With Students

I never expected to receive 68 responses and 87 questions so quickly. There is no doubt that students have serious anxiety over issues surrounding school reopening, and that this is on the top of their minds. The overwhelming tone was that students wanted answers as soon as possible. The lack of understanding about what to expect when they return to school is causing additional stress. I realize the situation is very fluid and that schools do not have all the answers yet. However, any information on what is already settled would go a long way in easing the concerns of my peers.

Health and Safety is the Greatest Concern

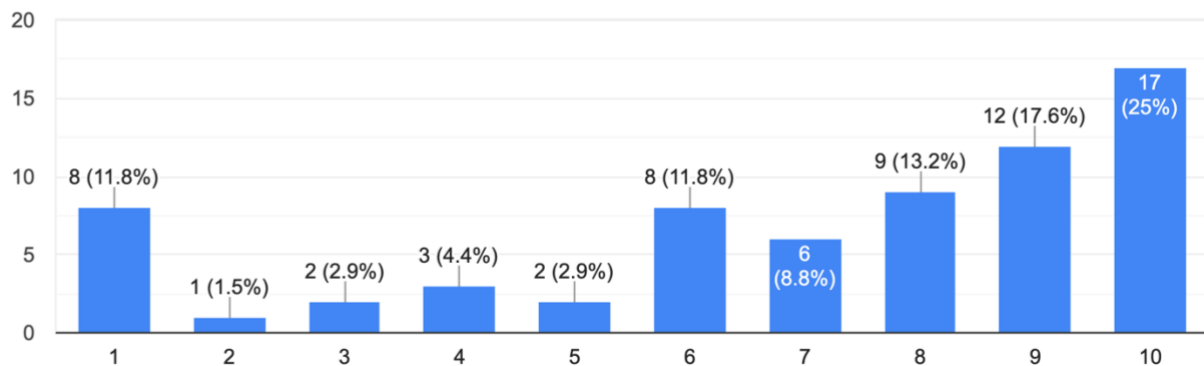
Of all the questions submitted, 63% were related to health and safety. It's worth noting that I live in a COVID hotspot and many of my peers attend high-density schools. However, I would be surprised if the responses were not similar in other parts of the country. Their concerns included the most basic parts of a school day, such as the bus rides, walking down the halls, classroom layout, and eating lunch.

Students Have Questions on School Reopening... Please Answer Them Now.

When I asked how nervous students were about returning to school on a scale of 1 through 10, 58% of responses were 8, 9, or 10 (see figure below). On the flip side, when asked how nervous students were about school not reopening, only 25% of responses were 8, 9, or 10.

On a scale of 1-10, how nervous are you about schools reopening?

68 responses



These responses combined with the nature of their questions leads me to believe that a great deal of the anxiety students are feeling is over concern for their health and well-being.

Clarity on Transitioning and Scheduling is Critical

The next largest group of questions was about the learning structure for the new school year. Quite simply, students want to know what their day might look like. Our world as we knew it was turned upside-down with no warning, so being provided with some notice of what our new world might look like would relieve some of the fear and uncertainty.

School is Much More Than Just Academic

Over 85% of the students who responded participate in sports, academic teams, clubs, student government, arts programs, and other extracurricular activities. The absence of these activities creates an emotional gap in student lives. It also leaves them with a large amount of free time, which could be used in an unproductive and potentially destructive manner. Whether schools restart physically or virtually, it is crucial that we find ways to continue these programs.



Final Thoughts

We realize that you don't have all of the answers yet, but the more you can communicate to students early in the process, the more anxiety and stress you will relieve. You can start by answering the questions from my peers, which I have included below.

On behalf of all students, thank you for all of your hard work in overcoming the challenges of this crisis.

About RestartED

RestartED is a grass roots movement launched during the COVID-19 pandemic by a group of superintendents that has banded together to share ideas and think through the chaos collectively. Join us to collaborate with education stakeholders across the nation to address the critical issues that we face. info@restarted.org.

About the author

Gabriela "Bela" Mead is a rising senior from Miramar, Florida. She is a candidate for admissions at the United States Naval Academy and a tournament golfer who was awarded 2019 Player of the Year on the Hurricane Junior Golf Tour, Girls 14-18 Division.

Student Questions on School Reopening

Health and Safety

1. Will we be provided protective equipment at school and if so how often?
2. Will there be temperature checks and COVID testing available at school?
3. How prepared would the faculty be in maintaining a healthy yet focused environment?
4. How will we effectively socially distance in such small classrooms?
5. Are we gonna stay in 1 classroom the whole day and what precautions will be taken
6. How certain are you that we will be protected by our schools?
7. Are they planning on covering the medical expenses for students who get sick in school?
8. How are you going to fit as many students in a classroom where we to reopen?
9. How would bus transportation work when the system is already overcrowded?
10. Where would students have lunch if there isn't enough space to maintain the six feet rule?
11. What sanitizing measures are going to be taken apart from simply wearing a mask?
12. Are we going to be switching classrooms or keeping a group of students in one classroom and have the teachers switch?
13. Is it really safe to go to school, knowing that Florida is one the states with the highest cases?
14. How will my school enforce social distancing?
15. Will they enforce a mandated mask requirement?
16. Will it be cleanly to use the bus, sit at desks, take my backpack to and from school everyday?
17. What will be the new regulations set to protect students?
18. How are they going to ensure that children adhere to social distancing rules? How are they going to react if kids start contracting COVID-19?
19. How are you gonna make sure students follow cdc guidelines
20. How will social distancing be enforced?
21. How will cafeterias function?
22. How will class rotations be structured to avoid an overload of students in halls?
23. Will there be a limited amount of students in each classroom?
24. If schools were to reopen in the fall, what precautionary measures would be taken in school and how do you plan on implementing those measures?
25. If a student does not follow these measures or refuses to, would there be a penalty or would these measures be a no tolerance policies?
26. Will meals still be distributed to students if distance learning continues in the fall?
27. How will the transportation system work if schools follow the hybrid system? (3 days at physical school/distance learning)
28. Is it fair to both parents and students to reopen schools at 84,000+ cases when you decided to close them only at a couple dozen?
29. In the case that we reopen schools, how is social distancing going to be accommodated in schools buses?

Students Have Questions on School Reopening... Please Answer Them Now.

30. How do they plan on keeping soap and hand sanitizer stocked when they couldn't keep the basics of toilet paper soap, and paper towels stocked during a normal school day?
31. How many restrictions will there be?
32. Will masks have to be worn?
33. In the case that we reopen schools, how is social distancing going to be accommodated in schools buses?
34. Will we now have separate lunches?
35. Is distance learning better to prevent so many restrictions and the spread of COVID?
36. Is reopening schools really safe given we reopened the state and cases grew exponentially?
37. Will it be worth more people getting sick for 'better instruction'?
38. My school is overpopulated, how do you expect to pack as many students back into classrooms during a global pandemic given that they were already overly full before any virus?
39. Will schools provide masks, hand sanitizer, etc.?
40. If so, to everyone or only to low income students (think like the free lunch program)?
41. How will social distancing be implemented in classrooms with full classes?
42. How will not touching amongst students be enforced?
43. How will we keep children from spreading the virus to each other through touch and through the air? People can't breathe in carbon dioxide for long.
44. Also, what will we do for children with elderly family members at home?
45. Why is school reopening during the second wave of the virus? Especially in Florida, as Florida has the most cases in America?
46. How do they plan on keeping the hallways in a social distancing manner
47. How well are they going to protect us when schools starts; what resources are you going to use when it comes to protecting students?
48. If reopening, how much are the classrooms capacity of students going to be minimized?
49. How will social distancing be maintained?
50. Will we be required to wear masks?
51. Will the school offer free masks and sanitizer?
52. How will we prevent the spread of the virus during lunch time?
53. How will the teachers protect themselves?
54. How will we prevent the spread of the virus through the handling of paper?

Transition from Distance Learning to Classroom Setting

55. How far along into the school year would we consider coming back?
56. How will clubs be conducted?
57. Will talent shows be canceled?
58. Will dance clubs have to prepare via zoom?
59. How will community service clubs actually be able to conduct service?
60. Is there any possibility of school being postponed due to the heightened amount of cases?
61. Will students have an option to take their classes online? Some may feel comfortable returning to school but those who are immunocompromised or otherwise reluctant to return to the classroom?



Students Have Questions on School Reopening... Please Answer Them Now.

- 62. When is it opening IRL and will it be 5 days or a hybrid model??
- 63. Will we have the choice to stay home and learn there rather than going into school?
- 64. How will state required testing (fsa, etc) be affected if we dont go back for physical school this year
- 65. How will the absence system work? Will absences have to be made up online?
- 66. In schools with mixed programs (both on campus and online), how will teachers balance having to teach both at around the same time?
- 67. How many days a week will we be at school?
- 68. How long will each day be?
- 69. Will everyone be going to school at the same time or will there be some kind of relay system?

Student/Teacher Life

- 70. What services will be disbanded/added because of covid?
- 71. Will students reliant on certain resources from school still have access to those items?
- 72. How will you maintain student productivity from home
- 73. Are teachers ok with this?
- 74. What do students want?
- 75. How will students keep academic integrity
- 76. Since Corona virus isn't transmissible through chlorinated water, is it possible for swimming teams to remain active?
- 77. If certain amounts of students get released to switch classes at diffrent times, will it take time away from class?
- 78. If we have to distance ourselves how can we get personal help from teachers?
- 79. How will you be able to keep everyone in school, if you can't how will you decide who gets to go and when?
- 80. Will students be able to participate in swimming?
- 81. Will complete online learning be an option for most students?

General

- 82. What is the plan?
- 83. When will we have a final answer for what is going happen?
- 84. Well just one and it's the same one on everyone's minds, how is it gonna work?
- 85. Why are you opening up schools?
- 86. How soon can we find out what the plan is for this year?

